

going to stop those protests, we are going to stop that communication that is First Amendment messaging that you give as parents to the school boards.

That is not the American way. That is the tyranny, and that is the fascism we are fighting about. That is what you and I were fighting with the Attorney General today about. And doggone it, we have got to stand up, and those parents need to be able to stand up, express themselves, and express their protest.

Mr. ROY. I always notice that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle snicker when we say things about critical race theory. They laugh at it. But they never want to debate the actual substance of the garbage being taught. They never want to actually look at the curriculum, look at the books, and look at what is being taught.

The Virginia Department of Education administered a training to teachers that included a presentation instructing them to embrace critical race theory and engage in race conscious teaching and learning in order to—this is a quote—reengineer attitudes and belief systems.

□ 1830

That is what it is about. Its roots are in Marxist ideology, and we know it. It is clear. It is evident, and we see it in Loudoun County right now where we see what is unfolding in Loudoun County, which is all about critical race theory, parents getting angry, and then a school board stepping right over the rights of a dad to be able to go down and protest to the school board because his daughter was raped in a bathroom by a dude wearing a skirt. And they want to then go down and say, oh, well, we are just going to say this is domestic terrorism.

And what happens? The Attorney General of the United States gives the FBI the power to go after parents because parents are protesting against this stuff because they know the power is in the people. We the people.

And you know what? The American people are on to this stuff, and the American people are going to stop it because that is the way we do things in this country.

Mr. BIGGS. That is where it is. That is where the fire is starting, right there at the level of the people.

And if we are going to save this country—I tell people all the time—it is going to come from the grassroots. It is going to come from the people. It is going to take off into the local jurisdictions in the States.

If you think that you are going to save this Nation with the United States Congress, you are sadly mistaken. It is the States. It is the individuals. It is the families. It is the people who love this country, and they are going to keep fighting us back. I am with you 100 percent on that.

Mr. ROY. Well, I thank the gentleman from Arizona for his comments. I believe my time is winding down.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has 1 minute remaining.

Mr. ROY. Well, I appreciate the Speaker for his indulgence. I appreciate my friend from Arizona.

I would just point out that what we learned today was highly troubling. What we saw with the Attorney General, what we learned today when we saw that the White House was colluding—we saw this in evidence in emails—colluding with the National Association of School Boards to include language in the memoranda that then got the Attorney General to go target parents with the FBI. We saw that. It was evidence. The AG admitted today in our committee, he said, because of that memo, I created this effort by the FBI. We saw that. It is happening. The American people are onto it.

The American people, if you are listening to me, you stand strong. You say no. Say no to vaccine mandates, say no to mask mandates, say no to all the nonsense coming out of this critical race theory garbage. Stand up for your kids. Go to school boards, turn over the school boards, and fight for freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

HOUSING IS CENTER OF ECONOMIC STABILITY AND PROSPERITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on my Special Order, and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, last month, the House Financial Services Committee Democrats unanimously passed the housing title of the Build Back Better Act to provide \$327 billion in critical investments needed to affordably house America and invest in neighborhoods across the country.

With the inclusion of my committee's housing title, the Build Back Better Act will create over 3 million affordable and accessible homes. It will fully address the needed repairs in public housing so residents can safely live in their homes with dignity.

It will help an estimated 750,000 households afford their rent or exit homelessness through expanded hous-

ing choice vouchers. It will address the racial wealth gap by helping first-generation home buyers access homeownership. These investments will help the schoolteacher experiencing homelessness; the children exposed to lead and other harmful toxins in their homes; the elderly neighbor who can't afford their prescription medications on a fixed income because the rent and mortgage is too high; the millennial who cannot rely on the bank of mom and dad for a downpayment to purchase their first home; and the millions of families that hang in the balance of imminent eviction or foreclosure due to the pandemic.

Just today, my committee heard from several witnesses on the importance of the housing choice voucher program and how transformational it can be for a family to receive this assistance. Harvard Professor Raj Chetty testified about his research showing that children whose families received a housing choice voucher to move to low-poverty neighborhoods later in life earned 30 percent more than children who remained in high-poverty neighborhoods. Another witness testified about how the voucher program helps his clients escape homelessness and achieve housing stability.

Housing is at the center of every household's economic stability and our Nation's prosperity. Without these investments in resilient, healthy, accessible, and fair housing, the Build Back Better Act will not improve the lives of families across the country, as we have promised it will.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to try, in the best way that I possibly can, to describe what is happening in the Congress of the United States of America. This build back mission, this act, is the vision of the President of the United States of America. President Biden has taken the leadership for job creation. He has taken the leadership to deal with some of the equity issues in this country. He has taken the leadership to do everything that can be done to ensure that we invest in the human potential of the citizens of this country.

He is doing everything that he can to deal with the pandemic, and he is unearthing and revealing the softness in our economy, in our society, prior to that pandemic, and this is difficult work. This is not easy.

Of course, eventually, we had to deal with the fact that we have some who were resisting the mission of the President to build back better.

At one point in time, I know there was some talk about a \$600 trillion bill. And, of course, we have heard most about a \$327 trillion bill. So at this point in time, we don't have the cooperation in order to realize the President's mission and vision about what it takes in order to support the citizens of this country in a way that will help to change their lives.

However, this is transformative. This is the kind of legislation that the President of the United States has developed and worked with because he

understands what it takes to strengthen the economy, to create jobs, to open up opportunities, to deal with rental assistance, and all of these issues.

Unfortunately, there are two members of the Democratic Party on the Senate side who do not agree. It has taken us a long time to understand what it is they want, what it is they don't want. But in the final analysis, they do not, at this point in time, support the President's vision.

However, those of us who chair committees worked very hard on our portion of the Build Back Better Act. I, as the chair of the Financial Services Committee, worked very hard with our staff in order to identify what is absolutely needed in order to support housing in a real way in this country. Housing issues that have been disregarded, that have not been paid attention to, housing issues that have gone unattended to for so many years, in that, of course, we dealt with public housing and the fact that they were in great disrepair, and they needed the resources necessary to fix those elevators; in order to get the lead out of the paint; in order to make sure that the stairways are safe.

I am reminded of the fact that Ms. VELÁZQUEZ from New York called me from one of the public housing developments last winter when there was no heat in the entire development.

So this money is desperately needed for the capital investments that we need to do in public housing. But not only do we deal with public housing, we deal with the fact that there are people who work every day but cannot afford the rents. We deal with people who are paying 50 percent of their income for rent. We deal with people who are on the ground in makeshift tents every day, homeless all over America.

One of the issues that has become very important to me is the choice voucher issue. So in addition to the \$80 billion that we advocated for public housing, there is another \$90 billion that we advocated for the vouchers. This includes not only choice vouchers. It includes project-based vouchers so that we can develop more affordable units.

Of course, we recognized what the cities wanted, what they have been dealing with, and what they believe will improve their ability to assist those who are trying to get safely housed. That is the HOME program that the cities love. That is the CDBG program and those programs we funded. In addition to that, I want you to know that Barney Frank and I worked for years in order to come up with the National Housing Trust Fund. So we had \$36 billion that we put into that.

Now, given that we don't know what the top line is in the Build Back Better Act, and we don't know exactly whether or not our Senators on the opposite side—on the Democratic side or the opposite side—will honor this vision and this leadership of the President. So without knowing what the top line is,

we know that probably we are all going to have to take cuts in all the areas that we have worked so hard for.

I am certainly prepared to accept our share of that responsibility. I know that cuts have to be made, but they have to be made fairly. And so there was a rumor that there was going to be zero dollars advocated to these choice vouchers and project-based vouchers, and, of course, that made me very unhappy. That caused me to have great concern. I have been working, organizing press conferences, working with the advocates, working with academicians and everybody to help the administration and everybody else understand that we cannot do without adequate vouchers for the people who are in such desperate need of rental assistance.

Everywhere all over the United States, particularly in Black and Brown communities, people have been waiting for years to be able to get these vouchers. And so we have a time now by which we are going to be funding some of what is needed in housing, and at the top of my list are the vouchers.

I want everybody to know that I have been talking with members of our Caucus and I have been talking with members of the Congressional Black Caucus. We are not backing away from getting a substantial number of vouchers funded. I am not going to back away. I am not going to be shy about it.

As a matter of fact, I will let the world know that I and others that I have organized will not vote for any bill that does not have a substantial number of vouchers in it so that we can deal with the longstanding issues of a lack of decent and safe and secure housing in our communities.

I don't need to say any more. All I need to let people know is, I am fair. I accept cuts across many of these areas that I have worked so hard for, but I do not want my number one issue in all of this housing to be undermined, neglected. And I do not want the people of our districts who expect their government to come to their aid when they are coming to the aid of others in so many ways—and I respect the fact that in our Caucus and in the Progressive Caucus, we have about five different kinds of interests that we want to see supported. I, tonight, am talking about housing. But I respect the agenda of the Progressive Caucus and the five areas that they have identified. But for me, housing is number one.

I will now call on those who are participating this evening.

I yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER), who is also my friend and chair of the Financial Services Committee's Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development and Insurance.

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Madam Chair for yielding. Let me begin my comments by thanking the gentlewoman, as I have done in front of you and away from you, because I

think you have placed housing on the front burner in this country right now, and it could not have come sooner.

Let me just say that—because I was disoriented because of the earlier speakers and then got a really bad headache, but I am going to still be able to share these comments—I probably did not grow up like many of the people in a contemporary United States. I grew up in Texas just outside of downtown Dallas, and I had no idea that we were poor.

□ 1845

Never mind the fact that we had an outhouse about 30 or 40 yards down a hill by a little creek. Never mind the fact that we didn't have windows in our house. Actually, we did have windows, but my father or somebody had put tin over the windows to keep the winter cold out. The good blessing there was, in Texas, the weather is quite mild in the winter.

But I lived in a shack, and there were six people in it. There were two rooms. My three sisters slept on one side of the room, and I slept on the other side of the room. The kitchen was not really a kitchen. We had what was called an icebox, and the iceman would bring a big block of ice every 2 or 3 days for 50 cents.

So I guess somebody could say, well, his parents weren't working and that is what happens in this country when people don't work. It may be interesting, at least for some, to know that my father attended Prairie View, did not graduate from Prairie View, came back home and started his own business, Cleaver's Cleaners. And in a town where there was rigid segregation, he could only do the people in the neighborhood, and that didn't provide enough income.

But he kept us in this house as comfortably as possible. In fact, one night, I asked my mother if I could share something that is called hoe cakes, big biscuits. She would make syrup, and I loved it. It was like heaven. I asked her if I could share those with the people who lived on the big street. We lived in an ally, and there were big mansions that are still there today, and I wanted to take some over and give it to the rich kids, because my mother said they didn't have any hoe cakes.

But we lived in a house. And my father, who turned 100 on July 16, paid \$20 a month on a shack, probably was worth maybe \$250. So I grew up in that house.

We then moved to public housing. My father worked—and, in fact, I don't know how he made it, and I don't know how he lived to be 100, because my father worked three jobs. He worked at the First Baptist Church, a huge church, still is a huge church that is known all over the country. And then, on Saturday mornings, he cleaned up the T. A. Litteken's Construction Company office building. Then on Saturdays, he would serve parties. He did that for years and years and years and years.

I hope he is watching this tonight, because I want to say thank you to him, because I don't know how he did all of that. Because my mother did not go to school, college, he felt like it was his responsibility to send her to college.

So we moved to public housing. And as I have said publicly, my father lied to the officials at the public housing, the Rosewood projects. He would not tell them that he had another job, because to do so meant that he would have to increase his rent.

So he saved every dime he could get, every dime, and bought a house in the White neighborhood and had it moved on a Saturday night to the east side of town where African Americans lived.

This was his dream. My father had the house fixed up. We moved into the house. I had my own bedroom. I thought we were rich. I mean, we actually had an indoor bathroom. I remember, I spent one night just flushing the toilet, just playing with it. It was like heaven. Then my mother started college when I was in the seventh grade. My father insisted.

My father was willing to do whatever he had to do to build his family. But the key to all of it was housing. That separated us from a lot of others. Housing, it is the most significant thing a human being can have. It makes them a part of the American Dream.

My daddy is somebody—and this rose so high—that his lawn was put on display in the local newspaper. The lawn of the summer, that is what he wanted to do.

Madam Chair, I appreciate everything you have done and said to bring us to this point.

I want to say to anybody watching, if you live in the United States, the most powerful, the richest Nation on this planet, you have no business sleeping outside with 700,000 people who do it every single night in this country. You have no business being unable to afford a house in the United States, because the average price now is almost \$400,000.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. TORRES), my friend.

Mr. TORRES of New York. Mr. Speaker, I would not be here today as a United States Congressman were it not for affordable housing and the opportunity it gave me and my family. So the fight is deeply personal, and I am honored to stand in the trenches with Chair WATERS and Chair CLEAVER as we fight for affordable housing at a critical moment.

We cannot build back better without realizing the vision of housing as a human right and without realizing the vision of housing as infrastructure. We cannot build back better without making America affordable to all Americans. Housing is not an afterthought; housing is foundational, not only to who we are but to who we become.

We know from the research of Professor Raj Chetty that ZIP Code is

often destiny and that where you live determines your access to opportunity. It often determines the quality of the schools you attend and the services you access.

We know that housing is not only foundational but also intersectional. It intersects with climate. In New York City, we saw not one, but two record rainfalls. And as our city has become less and less affordable. More and more Americans are living in illegal basement apartments that were heavily flooded by the remnants of Hurricane Ida, and those Americans died at the intersection of the housing crisis and the climate crisis.

Housing intersects with public health. As our city has become less and less affordable, more and more New Yorkers and Americans are living in overcrowded apartments. And we saw those overcrowded homes become Petri dishes for the spread of COVID-19.

Housing is essential. Housing stabilizes the essential workforce that stabilizes the rest of us. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there is not a single county in America where an essential worker earning minimum wage could afford a two-bedroom apartment, and there are only 7 out of 3,000 counties where an essential worker earning minimum wage could afford a one-bedroom apartment. If you are an essential worker earning the Federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, you would have to work 72 hours a week in order to afford a one-bedroom apartment.

The central cause of my life has been public housing. My mother taught me that the most important lesson in life is to never forget where you come from. I come from the Bronx, and I come from public housing.

In New York City, we have the New York City Housing Authority, commonly known as NYCHA, which is the largest provider of affordable housing in the continent of North America, housing a population of about half a million Americans. Half a million is larger than most large cities in the United States. If NYCHA were a city unto itself, it would be the largest city of low-income Black and Brown Americans in the country.

I feel, Mr. Speaker, that we are on the verge of making history. We are on the verge of going from FDR's New Deal to LBJ's Great Society to Joe Biden's Build Back Better. But the fundamental difference between FDR's New Deal and Joe Biden's Build Back Better is racial equity. FDR's New Deal was racially exclusionary, and the Build Back Better Act must be racially equitable.

We cannot build back better without advancing the cause of racial equity, but we cannot advance the cause of racial equity without rebuilding NYCHA, without rebuilding America's largest city of low-income Black and Brown Americans. We must rebuild affordable housing.

Infrastructure is about more than roads and bridges. It is about safe, de-

cent, affordable housing. Safe, decent, affordable housing represents roads and bridges to the American Dream, and I stand here as living proof.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN), who is also the Chair of the Financial Services Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is always a preeminent privilege to be in the company of Chairwoman WATERS, especially when she has taken up a cause that is not only worthy but noble. I greatly appreciate what she is doing tonight.

I would say this, housing is infrastructure, and housing is infrastructure for a multiplicity of reasons.

I neglected to say "and still I rise."

And still I rise to talk about housing is infrastructure. Housing is infrastructure.

If we traverse the highways and byways across our country, in our urban areas, we will find persons who are sleeping under overpasses, sleeping under bridges, sleeping along the roads, the roadways.

Overpasses and bridges have become housing. The infrastructure itself now has become housing. It is my belief that if an overpass can become housing, which is infrastructure, then the housing itself can be infrastructure. It is time for us to fully fund these housing programs.

I would mention but one that I think is very important to us, and that is the housing choice voucher program. This is an important program, because I had my staff to compile some statistical information for me, and here is what they have called to my attention. We need to know who actually benefits. Over 40 percent of these voucher recipients are households with children, 29 percent are the elderly, and 36 percent are nonelderly people with disabilities.

This myth that people are, for some reason, deciding that they will just make their way through life on the backs of others, is something that I call inanity. It is close to insanity to say this when you examine the empirical evidence.

We also find that, yes, the wait time is long, averaging 2.5 years nationally. Many of the lines are closed, with the 50 largest housing authorities having wait times of a year or more and some up to 8 years.

Madam Speaker and Madam Chair, there is much more to be said, but the time is limited. I would simply say this, vouchers have shown to reduce homelessness, help people pay rent, reduce poverty, help children exit the welfare system, help persons find and keep employment, help children do better in school, help people with disabilities maintain their health, help people achieve greater economic mobility, help people build wealth, and help families enter the middle class. It is time to fully fund the voucher system.

□ 1900

Ms. WATERS. I yield to the gentleman from New York (Ms. CLARKE).

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the American people to express my support for the maintenance of effort of the robust housing provisions of the Build Back Better Act that is before us as a body.

I would like to thank the chairwoman of the Financial Services Committee, a champion for all of us in the United States of America, but particularly for the poor and disenfranchised.

I rise on behalf of all our American families who are directly impacted by our affordable housing crisis, and I rise today, Mr. Speaker, because despite the proposed solutions Democrats fought to secure in the bill to address our housing crisis head-on, they are at risk of being eliminated, negotiated away from the revised package.

The housing crisis in America is real and growing exponentially each and every month. Housing insecurity is very real in the lives of far too many American families.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents in central and south Brooklyn who continue to struggle due to the lack of affordable housing and for whom overdevelopment of market-rate units has created a gentrification juggernaut that has swollen the ranks of the homeless in New York City and across this Nation, working families stuck who can't afford to stay in their apartments but can't afford to leave their towns.

The effects of gentrification and COVID-19 have truly compounded this crisis, causing many to be evicted from their homes and experiencing homelessness at a rate we have never seen, all due to the lack of real and sustained investment in affordable housing.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I believe our time has been exhausted. I yield back the balance of my time.

BUILD BACK BETTER ACT WILL PERMANENTLY CHANGE AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GROTHMAN) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend some time addressing the Chair and America on the American Rescue Plan or, actually, on the Build Back Better Act, which is kind of a follow-up on the American Rescue Plan.

We know the result of that original big-spending, government-printing act was a big increase in inflation in the United States, apparent to one and all. This is a follow-up bill to that, which will further require the Federal Reserve to print more money, driving up the cost of gas, of food, of housing everywhere we look.

But I am not going to address just the cost of this bill tonight. I am going to address the way I believe it will permanently change America and the vi-

sion the Democratic Party apparently has for America in the future.

In this bill, we are adding 87,000 IRS agents. For quite a while, when I would give talks about this bill, I would talk about 8,700 because when my staff told me it was 87,000, I felt I had to correct them. Nobody would want to add 87,000 IRS agents. But I stand corrected. I was wrong.

In this bill, we are adding 87,000 IRS agents, enough to fill up a massive American football stadium. Being from Wisconsin, I think of Camp Randall Stadium, where the University of Wisconsin plays. I think of Lambeau Field, where the Packers play. Somebody wants to hire that many IRS agents.

It is not in the bill, but it is in conjunction with a proposal I think the Biden administration has, to monitor every \$600 transfer of funds. What type of country would have this many IRS agents and want to know if you spend \$600 on who knows what—giving to the politically incorrect church; giving to a politically incorrect nonprofit; giving money to a fringe, eccentric sibling; whatever.

It sounds like something more you would think of in East Germany when East Germany was around rather than the United States. But that is apparently the vision of the party that put together the Build Back Better Act.

As was just mentioned in this bill, we are adding money for more low-income apartments. Now, that sounds good. President Biden also recently increased the food stamp allowance.

There is an author of mine that I suggest Americans read by the name of Theodore Dalrymple, an English author who was a doctor dealing both with English prisons and English slums.

He talked about the empty lives that people who live what I will refer to as the welfare lifestyle that England had. He attributed that empty life to the fact that in England—and maybe they backed off this by now, but at least England 15 years ago, no matter how irresponsible you were, you always got a free apartment; you always got free food; and you always got free medical care. In other words, there was no responsibility when you got up in the morning to really accomplish anything because you would always be able to exist.

We are close to that right now, but I am afraid the majority party wants to go all the way there when I look at this proposal. I hope the majority party stops and thinks in addition to the cost, more importantly, psychologically what will it do to the people of America if, when you graduate from high school or don't graduate from high school, if you want to, particularly if you have a child, you can live a lifestyle in which you can be completely irresponsible. You will always be able to eat and always be able to have a nice air-conditioned, heated apartment, which will probably have more square feet per person than the

average housing in Europe, much less around the world.

This will, again, change America for the worse. Psychologically, it will give people nothing to live for. By the way, since it is usually targeted at people with children, it also will create a sad situation we have already created in this country in which men will have less responsibility for taking care of their children.

When you have no other responsibilities in life, it can lead to, first, an empty, depressed life; and, secondly, it can lead to—what?—idle hands are the Devil's workshop.

There are other things in this bill that will also change America. We are aiming for universal 3- or 4-year-old kindergarten, I guess you would call it. As a sidelight, this bill says that the people in these daycares, which is kind of what they are, need a college degree. That is a little bit of snobbery that we should put an end to, the idea that if I have a college degree, I am always better off than somebody who doesn't have a college degree.

If you are applying for a job, we treat the hardworking, intelligent, commonsense person without a college degree as being, for some reason, less worthy of a higher paycheck than the lack of commonsense person who may not have a strong work ethic who does get a college degree. That is just a sidelight. A bad provision there.

But another provision about this that is bad is you are taking the care of the 3- and 4-year-olds out of the parents and giving it exclusively to the government. Now, a given number of parents may prefer it, but I think throughout most of this country, the raising of the children has been primarily the responsibility of the family.

I know the Marxist element in the other party does not want parents and, in particular, fathers too involved in their children's upbringing. But I feel this will again permanently change America.

I should point out, if you look at the studies, American schools sometimes have bad test scores. But our test scores are pretty good in the fourth grade. In other words, our problem in this country isn't that the children are doing poorly when the parents take care of them. Those test scores for children in American schools are falling in middle school and high school. So the problem is later on. It is not with the 3- and 4-year-olds when the parents have responsibility.

I should also point out that we are, in this bill, increasing Pell grants. Now, there are two problems there. Pell grants are grants going toward what we will refer to as low-income people, but they don't go to middle-class people.

I am already getting complaints in my district from Pell grants in the past as couples, married couples who thought they were being responsible in raising their children, they find out their children might be going \$30,000 or